United Nations A/67/264

General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 August 2012

Original: English

Sixty-seventh session
Item 70 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 36/151 and 66/150. It describes the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture at its thirty-fifth session. The report also provides information on policy decisions adopted by the Board.

* A/67/150.

12-45517 (E) 240812

Please recycle

I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/151, by which it established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. It presents the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its thirty-fifth session, which was held in Geneva from 27 January to 3 February 2012. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved those recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General. The present report complements the report on the activities of the Fund submitted to the Human Rights Council at its nineteenth session (A/HRC/19/26).

B. Mandate of the Fund

2. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with the practice established by its Board of Trustees in 1982, the Fund provides grants to established channels of assistance, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers, that submit projects involving medical, psychological, social, financial, legal and humanitarian or other forms of assistance to victims of torture and members of their families.

C. Administration of the Fund and Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with the advice of a Board of Trustees composed of five members acting in their personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. On 26 October 2011, the Secretary-General reappointed Ms. Mercedes Doretti (Argentina) for a final term of three years and appointed Ms. Natasa Kandic (Serbia), Ms. Maria Cristina de Mendonca (Portugal), Mr. Morad el-Shazly (Egypt) and Ms. Anastasia Pinto (India) for a three-year term, renewable once.

4. Given the timeline of those appointments, the thirty-fifth session of the Board, originally planned from 17 to 21 October 2011, had to be postponed, and was held from 27 January to 3 February 2012. At that session, the members of the Board appointed by acclamation Ms. Doretti as Chair for a two-year term. The Board also examined applications for funding and made recommendations on grants to be allotted to beneficiary organizations for the period from January to December 2012.

5. Pursuant to recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its report on the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery in 2007, the secretariats of both Funds have been placed, as from 1 January 2012, in the Human Rights Treaties Division of OHCHR. Furthermore, the post of Secretary of both Funds was established, and a new post of Fundraiser

dedicated to the humanitarian funds was created in the Donor and External Relations Section of the Division.

II. Management of grants

A. Admissibility criteria

6. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the Fund's guidelines. They require a project to be presented by a non-governmental entity, including non-governmental organizations, associations of victims and family members of victims, private and public hospitals, legal clinics, public interest law firms and individual lawyers. The beneficiaries must be direct victims of torture and/or direct family members. Priority is given to projects providing direct assistance to victims of torture, which may consist in medical or psychological assistance, help with social or financial reintegration through vocational training for victims, and various forms of legal assistance for victims or members of their families, including assistance in seeking redress or applying for asylum. Depending on the resources available, the Fund may finance projects to organize training programmes, seminars or conferences to allow health-care professionals or other service providers to exchange best practices. However, grant requests for projects involving investigation, research, studies, publications or similar activities are not admissible.

7. The Fund can provide emergency assistance to individuals in countries where no project is receiving support. This type of request is examined according to specific procedures outlined in the Fund's guidelines. Detailed information on the various types of assistance provided through the projects financed by the Fund, as well as their impact on beneficiaries, can be found in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session (A/58/284, paras. 27-34).

B. Monitoring and evaluation of grants

8. From August 2011 to June 2012, evaluation and monitoring visits of organizations already funded by the Fund or of potential grantees were undertaken by the Fund secretariat, Board members, OHCHR field presences and United Nations country offices and agencies in Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chile, the Czech Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, India, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Liberia, Nepal, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Tunisia, Uganda, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and the Occupied Palestinian territories.

III. Financial situation of the Fund

9. From 2008 to 2011, the annual voluntary contributions to the Fund decreased dramatically, by 30 per cent ($3.6 million), amounting to $7.9 million in 2011. This situation, largely attributed to the ongoing financial crisis, made it difficult to meet the ever-increasing demands for assistance.

10. Owing to the significant decrease in the level of contributions received in 2011, at its thirty-fifth session the Board was compelled to introduce further strategic cuts to grants awarded to ongoing projects for 2012, in addition to those already in place for the 2011 cycle. Consequently, a decrease of 40 per cent was applied to the grants awarded to projects located in Western European and other States, while the level of support for projects located in other regions was reduced on average by 30 per cent.

11. On the basis of the requests received in previous years, it is expected that approximately $22 million will be requested by organizations for 2013. If no additional contribution is received in 2012, the Board will continue to face a significant shortfall and might have to maintain or further increase the strategic cuts to the grants to be awarded for 2013 and place additional limits on its support to new projects.

Contributions and pledges received

12. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received since the previous report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the activities of the Fund (A/66/276). These contributions will enable the Board to make recommendations for grants at its thirty-sixth session, to be held from 15 to 19 October 2012. Grants recommended at its next session will be disbursed in January 2013 for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2013.

Contributions and pledges received from 23 July 2011 to 12 July 2012

Donor	*Amount (United States dollars)*	*Date of receipt*
States		
Afghanistan	500	1 March 2012
Andorra	20 938	28 October 2011
Andorra	12 044	12 July 2012
Argentina	3 500	23 February 2012
Austria	112 882	18 April 2012
Canada	60 000	11 April 2012
Chile	10 000	4 October 2011
Czech Republic	9 433	26 September 2011
Denmark	383 656	22 November 2011
Finland	194 667	9 January 2012
Germany	730 412	12 April 2012
India	25 000	4 April 2012
Ireland	113 941	29 March 2012
Kuwait	10 000	16 February 2012
Norway	174 490	23 May 2012
Peru	1 850	11 May 2012
Spain	341 997	3 February 2012
Turkey	10 000	12 December 2011

Donor	*Amount (United States dollars)*	*Date of receipt*
United Arab Emirates	10 000	16 March 2012
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	158 228	21 March 2012
United States of America	5 700 000	8 November 2011
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	38 948	17 November 2011
Holy See	1 000	9 September 2011
Subtotal	**8 123 486**	
Private/public donors		
Individuals	25 285	25 August 2011 and 10 November 2011
Subtotal	**25 285**	
Total contributions	**8 148 771**	
Pledges 2011 and 2012		
Belgium	284 900	
Turkey	10 000	
Total pledges	**294 900**	

IV. Thirty-fifth session of the Board of Trustees

13. The thirty-fifth session of the Board of Trustees was held from 27 January to 3 February 2012. At that session, the Board examined information prepared by its secretariat concerning 309 projects, including new applications for 2012, and the analysis of narrative, financial and audit reports on the use of grants paid in previous years. It considered requests for new grants amounting to $19,212,807 for more than 280 projects providing direct assistance to victims of torture and members of their families in 2012, as well as requests for 15 projects amounting to $397,388 for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims to exchange information on experiences and best practices.

A. Recommendations

14. The Board of Trustees made recommendations for grants for over 220 ongoing and 22 new projects providing direct assistance to 70,000 victims in more than 70 countries, for a total amount of $7,089,471. The High Commissioner approved the Board's recommendations on 16 February 2012 on behalf of the Secretary-General.

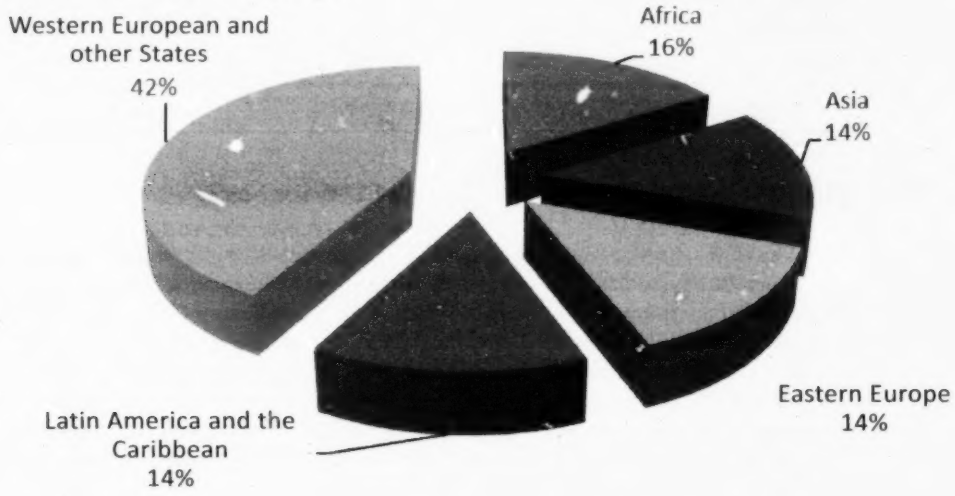
15. As outlined in paragraph 10, owing to the decrease in the level of contributions received, at its thirty-fifth session the Board had to decide on strategic cuts for the 2012 grants cycle. With a view to mitigating the effects of the cuts on small grass-roots organizations, in particular those located in remote regions where access to alternative funding is difficult, no strategic cuts were applied to grants of $20,000 or

below. It should be noted that, as a rule, support to all grantees was capped at $80,000 instead of the usual $200,000. In addition, funding for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims was capped at $5,000 instead of the usual $30,000. Moreover, as was already the case in 2011, support for direct assistance projects presented by new grantees was capped at $20,000 instead of the usual $50,000.

16. Despite the financial limitations, the Board recommended that $150,000 be set aside for urgent requests and unforeseen needs in 2012. For example, in order to respond to the needs of victims in the context of the recent developments across the Middle East and North Africa, in June 2012 an open call was launched for projects aimed at assisting victims of torture.

17. The Board also recommended that $150,000 be set aside for intersessional grants. The Board was subsequently apprised of 12 projects that were likely to be presented for funding during the intersessional period and required funding amounting to more than $200,000. The figure shows the allocation of grants by region.

Grants awarded in 2012, by region



B. Policy decisions

18. At its thirty-fifth session, the Board discussed issues related to the substantial decrease in the level of voluntary contributions to the Fund since 2011. The Board was concerned by the increasing fragmentation of the grants awarded to ongoing projects due to the decrease in contributions to the Fund. The Board was of the view that under such circumstances it might have to explore in the future the possibility of embracing a more competitive approach to the awarding of new grants.

19. The Board also decided to explore the possibility of availing itself of two fellowships in 2013. The selected fellows would receive training on the human rights system and relevant thematic issues in accordance with modules developed for this purpose. In addition, the fellows would assist with substantive research and

analysis of developments and jurisprudence concerning torture and compilation of best practices and lessons learned on projects financed by the Fund.

C. Meetings with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Deputy High Commissioner

20. At its thirty-fifth session, the Board met with the Donor and External Relations Section of OHCHR to discuss the financial situation of the Fund in 2011 and perspectives for 2012 and 2013, including future efforts in fundraising with Member States, private foundations, corporations and individuals.

21. The Board and the Section discussed other issues of common concern, including United Nations policies on earmarking and accepting contributions and the role of the Fund in consulting other institutional donors on grant-making policies.

22. The Board expressed its concern about the decrease in the number of donors to the Fund, which comprised 24 Member States in 2011, compared with the all-time high in 2004, when 51 Member States contributed to the Fund. The Board emphasized the importance of enlarging the donor base of the Fund as a sign of support for the universality of human rights and of solidarity to victims of torture and members of their families.

23. At the closing of the thirty-fifth session, the Board met with the Deputy High Commissioner to present the concluding remarks of the session. She acknowledged that over the past two years the Fund had experienced a significant decrease in voluntary contributions received from Member States. She encouraged initiatives aimed at increasing the outreach and visibility of the Fund. In this regard, she underlined the need for the Board to work closely with the newly appointed Fundraiser in order to further attract earmarked contributions, including from the private sector.

V. International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

24. On 26 June 2012, the Secretary-General made the following statement to commemorate the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture:

> Twenty-five years since the entry into force of the Convention against Torture, this cruel and dehumanizing practice remains pervasive.
>
> Every day, women, men and children are tortured or ill treated with the intention of destroying their sense of dignity and human worth. In some cases, this is part of a deliberate State policy of instilling fear and intimidating its population.
>
> In too many countries, people's legitimate demands for freedom and human rights are met with brutal repression. Even when regimes change, torture often persists and a culture of impunity remains.
>
> On this International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, we express our solidarity with, and support for, the hundreds of thousands of victims of torture and their family members throughout the world who endure such suffering.

We also note the obligation of States not only to prevent torture but to provide all torture victims with effective and prompt redress, compensation and appropriate social, psychological, medical and other forms of rehabilitation. Both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have now strongly urged States to establish and support rehabilitation centres or facilities.

The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture supports hundreds of organizations and entities that provide assistance to victims of torture and their family members in all regions of the world. However, the Fund has seen a significant decrease in contributions over the past two years.

I strongly encourage States to reverse this trend, despite current global financial uncertainty. By concretely supporting victims of torture, the international community will prove its unequivocal determination and commitment to fight torture and impunity.

25. The day was also commemorated by the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Fund, which issued a joint statement expressing concern at reprisals faced by victims of torture seeking redress.

VI. How to make a contribution to the Fund

26. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities can contribute to the Fund. For more information on how to contribute and Fund details, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations, CH 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; e-mail: unvfvt@ohchr.org; telephone: 41 22 917 9624; fax: 41 22 917 9017.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

27. **Pursuant to the appeals made by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/150 and by the Board of Trustees of the Fund as included in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/66/276), donors are invited to pay their contributions to the Fund before the opening of the thirty-sixth session of the Board (to be held from 15 to 19 October 2012), in order that the contributions may be taken into account at that session.**

28. **In the light of the difficult financial situation faced in 2011 and 2012, the Board has also reiterated its call to regular donors to increase, as much as possible, their contributions to the Fund in order to provide the Board with the necessary resources to meet the growing needs of victims of torture and members of their families worldwide.**

29. **The Board strongly encourages Governments that have not yet contributed to the Fund to do so for the first time, preferably by October 2012.**